

# **This Is Your Life**

**This Is Your Life** - Milton Berle - Aired June 6, 1956  
Aired from October 1, 1952 to June 8, 1961 - 350 episodes  
(Ralph Edwards was the host for 342 of them)

The location at 1735 Vine Street in Hollywood opened on January 24, 1927 as the Hollywood Playhouse. The opening show was announced in a January 2, 1927 L.A. Times article: "'Alias the Deacon' Set For New Hollywood Playhouse." The play featured Berton Churchill, then the biggest star on Broadway.

In 1942, the theatre was purchased from Guaranty Bank by C.E. Toberman and Sid Grauman after the bank had foreclosed. Toberman moved the name El Capitan to this building as his original El Capitan (on Hollywood Blvd.) was then being called The Paramount. Their first tenant was Ken Murray, whose "Blackouts" had a long run of seven years and 3,844 performances.

The "Blackouts" run ended in 1949 and Toberman and Grauman sold the theatre to the Catholic Church. NBC moved in to use the building as a TV studio. They were initially on a lease, but bought the building in 1951. *This Is Your Life* and many other NBC television shows were filmed at this location.

In 1963, ABC acquired the building and after a \$400,000 remodel renamed it the Jerry Lewis Theatre. The final *Jerry Lewis Show* aired on December 14, 1963. ABC then renamed the theatre as *The Hollywood Palace* in 1964. Merv Griffin's Show was also taped at this location. After *The Merv Griffin Show* moved to another location, the theatre closed.

In 1987, ABC sold the building to Dennis Lidke who remodeled and opened it as a club called The Palace. A different management team took over sometime in the 1990's. In 2002, the building was purchased by John Lyon and Steve Adelman of Hollywood Entertainment Partners. They renamed the building as the Avalon which still stands today.

---

### **The Brown Derby - Vine Street**

This restaurant opened on February 14, 1929. Due to its close location to movie studios, it became the place to do deals and be seen.

The Hollywood Brown Derby is noted as the birthplace of the Cobb salad, which was said to have been hastily arranged from leftovers by owner Bob Cobb for showman and theater owner Sid Grauman. It was chopped fine, because Grauman had just had dental work done and could not chew very well.

According to Shirley Temple, the non-alcoholic drink bearing her name was invented at the Brown Derby in the mid-1930's. Temple herself never liked the drink and noted her personality rights had been used without permission.

Like the Brown Derby on Wilshire Boulevard, it had a celebrity wall with hundreds of celebrity drawings, paintings and caricatures. Jack Lane drew many of these caricatures between 1947 and 1985. Another artist whose work was displayed was Nicholas Volpe. He was commissioned by the Brown Derby to paint portraits of up to 200 top recording artists to be displayed in the restaurant's Hall of Fame Record Room.

The Hollywood Brown Derby closed for the last time at its original site on April 3, 1985. As a result of damage caused by the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the building at 1628 North Vine Street was declared unsafe by the City of Los Angeles and was the first building in Hollywood ordered to be demolished. It was razed in February of 1994. There was a re-creation of the Hollywood Brown Derby at the MGM Grand hotel in Las Vegas in 1996. A ten-year agreement was entered into at that time. It has since closed.

---

### **This Is Your Life Trivia**

The programs for Ann Sheridan, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Robert Young and Gloria Swanson were canceled because they all found out in advance what was being planned.

The staff members of the show were forbidden to use Ralph Edwards as a subject.

---

**NBC Studio 6B** (home of Milton Berle's show) - was the former home of *Broadway Open House*, Bob Hope's radio program, the television version of *Texaco Star Theater*, *The Ernie Kovacs Show*, *Tic Tac Dough*, *Tonight Starring Jack Paar*, *Play Your Hunch*, *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, *NBC Nightly News*, *The Bell Telephone Hour*.

**Milton Berle** - was born as Mendel Berlinger in New York. He was the youngest of four brothers. He started show business in 1913 at the age of five when he won a children's Charlie Chaplin contest.

Berle made his stage debut in a revival of *Florodora* in Atlantic City, New Jersey. At 16, he was working as a master of ceremonies in vaudeville along with playing small bit parts in silent films during the 1910's and 1920's. In 1932, he starred in Earl Carroll's "Vaniities," a Broadway musical. By the early 1930's, he was a successful stand-up comedian. Berle also worked as a songwriter. He wrote the Spike Jones, tune *Leave the Dishes in the Sink, Ma.*

On radio, from 1934 to 1936, Berle appeared on *The Rudy Vallee Hour* and *The Gillette Original Community Sing*, a Sunday night comedy-variety program. In 1939, he was the host of *Stop Me If You've Heard This One* with panelists finishing jokes sent in by listeners.

He appeared on television for the first time in 1929 for an experimental broadcast in Chicago which he hosted in front of 129 people. Berle brought back routines of his vaudeville days for his debut on commercial television as host of *The Texaco Star Theatre* on June 8, 1948 for NBC. He was named the permanent host of this show later that same year. The show was a huge success and before long, Berle had earned the nicknames Mr. Television and Uncle Miltie.

For his contribution to television, Milton Berle was inducted to the Hollywood Walk of Fame on February 8, 1960. His star is located at 6771 Hollywood Blvd. in the heart of Hollywood.

---

## Person to Person

Edward R. Murrow, born Egbert Roscoe Murrow, hosted the original series from its inception on October 2, 1953 until June 26, 1959. He interviewed numerous celebrities in their homes from his New York studio. His opening remarks were "Good evening, I'm Ed Murrow and the name of the program is 'Person to Person'. Murrow was the host for 211 episodes.

The program's first guest was catcher Roy Campanella who had hit a home run to win Game 3 for the Brooklyn Dodgers against the New York Yankees in the 1953 World Series.

---

**Ethel Merman** - was born Ethel Agnes Zimmermann. Her father, Edward Zimmermann and her mother, Agnes (née Gardner) Zimmermann insisted she have an education with training in secretarial skills, in case her dream of entertainment career failed.

After graduating from high school in 1924, Merman worked as a stenographer. During this time, she also began appearing in nightclubs. She was first hired by Jimmy Durante's partner Lou Clayton. At this time, she decided the name Ethel Zimmermann was too long for a theater marquee. She considered combining Ethel with Gardner or Hunter, which was her grandmother's maiden name. In order to appease her father, she abbreviated Zimmermann to Merman.

Merman was invited to audition for the role of San Francisco café singer Kate Fothergill in George and Ira Gershwin's 1930 musical, *Girl Crazy*. When they heard her sing "I Got Rhythm", the Gershwins immediately cast her.

Merman introduced the songs "Sam and Delilah" and "Boy! What Love Has Done to Me!" as well as "I Got Rhythm" in the show. It ran for 272 performances. During the run of *Girl Crazy*, Paramount signed Merman to appear in a series of 10 short musical films.

Merman next went to Hollywood to appear in *We're Not Dressing* in 1934. Despite working with a cast including Bing Crosby, Carole Lombard with Burns and Allen and under the direction of Academy Award winning director Norman Taurog, Merman was unhappy with the experience. She also appeared on screen with Eddie Cantor in *Kid Millions*, also in 1934.

Her return to Broadway established her as a major star. *Anything Goes* was the first of five Cole Porter musicals in which Merman starred. Merman was overlooked for the film version of *Anything Goes* in 1936. Bing Crosby insisted his wife Dixie Lee be cast as Reno Sweeney opposite his Billy Crocker. When Dixie unexpectedly dropped out of the project, Merman was cast in the role she had originated on stage.

In August 1945, Merman was visited by Dorothy Fields, who proposed she star as Annie Oakley in a musical her brother Herbert and she were writing with Jerome Kern. *Annie Get Your Gun* opened on May 16, 1946 at the Imperial Theatre. It ran for nearly three years and 1,147 performances. Merman lost out on the film version to Judy Garland, who was later replaced by Betty Hutton.

Ethel Merman and Irving Berlin teamed up for *Call Me Madam* in 1950. She won the Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Musical. She also starred in the 1953 screen version, winning the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Motion Picture Musical or Comedy for her performance. The following year, she appeared as the matriarch of the singing and dancing Donahue family in *There's No Business Like Show Business*, a film with another Irving Berlin score. *Gypsy*, based on the memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee, starred Merman as her domineering stage mother Rose Hovick. This was Merman's best remembered performance. The musical opened on May 21, 1959 at The Broadway Theatre. Merman was offered the title role in *Hello Dolly*, but she declined it. However six years later, she did join the cast which produced an extremely well reception.

In 1963, she was co-starring role in the comedy film *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* alongside Spencer Tracy, Sid Caesar, Jonathan Winters, Phil Silvers, Buddy Hackett and Mickey Rooney, where she played Mrs. Marcus, the loudmouthed, battle-axe mother in-law of Milton Berle.

In 1979, she recorded *The Ethel Merman Disco Album*, with many of her signature songs set to a disco beat. Her final screen role was a self-parody in the 1980 comedy film *Airplane!*, where she portrayed Lieutenant Hurwitz, a shell-shocked soldier who thinks he is Ethel Merman. In the cameo appearance, Merman leaps out of bed singing "Everything's Coming Up Roses" as orderlies try to sedate her.

Merman co-wrote two memoirs: *Who Could Ask For Anything More?* in 1955 and *Merman* in 1978.

**Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall** - Howard Hawks introduced Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall while Bogart was filming *Passage To Marseille* in 1944. The three eventually got together on *To Have And Have Not* also in 1944. This was Bacall's film debut. It has several similarities to *Casablanca*: the same kind of hero and enemies along with a piano player portrayed this time by Hoagy Carmichael in a supporting role. When they met, Bacall was 19 and Bogart 44. He nicknamed her "Baby."

Their emotional connection was strong from the beginning. At first, their difference in age and acting experience presented a mentor student type of dynamic. Their affair was Bogart's first with a leading lady. His early meetings with Bacall were discreet and brief. The relationship made it easier for Bacall to make her first film and Bogart did his best to put her at ease with jokes and quiet coaching. He encouraged her to steal scenes. Howard Hawks also did his best to highlight her role and found Bogart very easy to direct. A few months after completing *To Have And Have Not*, Bogart and Bacall were reunited for *The Big Sleep* in 1946. The film was successful in spite of some critics finding the plot confusing.

*Dark Passage* in 1947, was Bogart and Bacall's next film in which they appeared together. Bogart and Bacall's final pairing in a film was *Key Largo* in 1948. The film was directed by John Huston.

Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall were married in a small ceremony on May 21, 1945. They moved into a \$160,000 white brick mansion in the exclusive neighborhood of Holmby Hills near Los Angeles, California. Today, the Bogart-Bacall house is worth over \$20,000,000.

Bogart and Bacall worked on an early 1955 color telecast in an NBC adaptation of *The Petrified Forest* for Producers' Showcase. Bogart received top billing, Henry Fonda played Leslie Howard's role and Bacall played Bette Davis' part. Bogart also performed radio adaptations of some of his best-known films, such as *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon* and recorded a radio series entitled *Bold Venture* with Bacall.

With Bacall, Bogart became a father at age 49. They had two children. Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall remained together until Bogart's death in 1957.

---

## **You Asked For It Notes**

*You Asked For It* was a human interest television show created and hosted by Art Baker. Originally, it was called *The Art Baker Show*. The title of the program was changed in April of 1951. It aired on television between the years 1950 and 1959. Later versions of the series were seen in 1972, 1981, and 2000. Viewers were asked to send in postcards describing something that they wanted to see on television. The show was originally broadcast live. As a result, some of the more dangerous requests took on added elements of suspense. The show began on the DuMont Television Network from December 29, 1950 to December 7, 1951. In January of 1952, the program moved to ABC, where it remained until the end of its original run on September 27, 1959.

The show was sponsored by Skippy Peanut Butter and Studebaker Automobiles. Art Baker hosted the show until early 1958. Jack Smith took over for the rest of the program's run. ABC canceled the show in 1959.

The Our Gang Reunion aired on February 22, 1951. Appearing on this telecast were Allen "Farina" Hoskins, Johnny Downs, Mickey Daniels, Joe Cobb and Jackie Condon. Also appearing on this segment were Hal Roach Studios on-set school teacher Fern Carter, cameraman Art Lloyd and director Bob McGowan.

Our Gang began in 1922 as a silent short subject series produced by the Hal Roach Studios and released by Pathé Exchange. The series entered its most memorable period after converting to sound in 1929. Production continued at the Hal Roach Studios until 1938, when the Our Gang production unit was sold to MGM, where production continued until 1944. A total of 220 Our Gang comedies were filmed during these years.

According to Hal Roach, the idea for Our Gang came to him as he looked out of his office window to a lumberyard across the street, where he saw some children having an argument. The children had all taken sticks from the lumberyard to play with, but the smallest child had the biggest stick and the others were trying to force him to give it to the biggest child. After realizing that he had been watching the children argue for 15 minutes, Roach thought a short film series about children just being themselves might be a success.

The first cast of Our Gang was mainly the children recommended to Roach by studio employees. The first member, Ernie "Sunshine Sammy" Morrison was under contract to Hal Roach. The other Our Gang members included Hal Roach studios photographer Gene Kornman's daughter Mary Kornman, their friends' son Mickey Daniels and family friends Allen Hoskins, Jack Davis, Jackie Condon and Joe Cobb.

Art Baker also granted other requests on *You Asked For It* to see show-business personalities. He staged encore performances by singers Gloria Jean, Nick Lucas and Arthur Lee Simpkins; comedians Buster Keaton, Eddie Gribbon and El Brendel with his wife Flo Bert; actor Bela Lugosi and cowboy bullwhip artist Whip Wilson were among these programs.

---

## **REFERENCES**

The Life and Times Of The Little Rascals  
by Leonard Maltin and Richard W. Bann

Los Angeles Theatres website

Internet Movie Database

Wikipedia